

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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"A LEAL LASS."

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CHAPTER XIX. ENGAGED.

"WELL, have you written it?" asked Fred of Gower, as coolly and casually as though the letter were an invitation. His spirits had so recovered themselves that the danger he had passed through looked now long behind him, and dwarfed to nothing in the distance. But Gower, who was in the agonies of penitential composition, naturally did not see things in this light.

"No, I haven't," he answered doggedly. Fred, sobered and alarmed by his tone, said apologetically:

"I've been so relieved that I can't help being in good spirits. To tell you the truth, old man, I wasn't sure of May."

"Have you seen her?" asked Gower eagerly.

"Of course I've seen her. I was quite as anxious about it as yourself."

"And what did she say?"

"She thinks there never was anything so splendid as what you're doing for me—or rather for her—and she's just as grateful as ever she can be."

"Oh, grateful, eh?"

"Well, you couldn't expect her to fall in love with you only for that; and if she were hit already she certainly wouldn't tell me so. But I shouldn't be in such spirits, I can tell you, if I didn't think your chances excellent."

"Did she—do you think I might speak at once?"

"It would look a little like sending in your bill, wouldn't it?" Fred ventured to say in his resentment at what he supposed to be the bargain Gower was striking—no

letter unless immediate payment was made for it. In truth, Gower suspected Fred of equivocation; of suggesting that May's acceptance of him was almost certain—while he knew it to be exceedingly doubtful—in order to ensure the writing and posting of the fateful letter to his father.

"I can't set my mind to anything," he said, glancing significantly at the half-written letter. "I can't set my mind to anything while in this suspense."

"All right," rejoined Fred huffily, "she will accept you, I have no doubt, now, as a debt; while, if you had the patience to wait a week, she would have taken you for yourself."

"Do you mean she doesn't care at all for me for myself?"

"I mean just this: she's got her head full of all sorts of romantic notions, and she's fitting them all on to you now for what you're doing for her; but if you propose for her at once, it will look like a demand for payment, won't it?"

"But she knows what my feelings are, that I mean to ask her?"

"There are her feelings to consider, and the best way to work on them. If you hold off for a day or two, as if you feared reminding her of an obligation, she'd think you no end of a hero."

"But I can't; I can't go on like this," Gower answered doggedly.

"Oh, well; ask her at once if you like. It's only a question of taste."

"I don't see what taste has got to do with it—if she knows I'm going to ask her, any way."

"Only that I made you out so disinterested and magnanimous, and all that sort of thing, and it's a pity to spoil the picture. Of course, if she'd accept you next week, she'll accept you this; but it

would be more for yourself next week, and more for my sake this week."

"Did she say— Do you think she'll accept me?"

"I don't see how she can help herself," Fred cried impatiently.

"You mean she'll accept me only because of this?" Gower asked, pointing with the pen to his half-written letter.

"I don't mean anything of the sort. That has this much to do with it—it makes her think you a hero, and she'd never accept any man whom she didn't imagine to be a hero of some kind. But she doesn't think of it at all as a transaction or a bargain, and she would recoil from it if she did. That's my only reason for wishing you to give her a little line—to let her feel herself free."

"It's not likely I should put it to her as a bargain," Gower answered, sullenly.

"Very well; very well. I'm not going over it all again. Ask her to-day—this morning—and then you'll know where you are, and can write that letter or not, according to her answer." So saying, Fred turned coolly on his heel and quitted the room. "It's only a game of Brag," thought Gower, "and I shall certainly not ruin myself with my father for nothing."

Having made this resolve, he shut up his desk and went down to watch and await his chance of seeing May.

It was some time before May came downstairs—ready dressed to go out. Gower, hearing her say something to her mother while descending the stairs, hurried forth to intercept her, and, upon seeing her dressed to go out, had the presence of mind to cross the hall for his hat—as if he, too, were going out, quite independently of her.

"Were you going out?" he asked, in a surprised tone.

"Yes; I have to go to the schools."

"Perhaps you would allow me to accompany you—part of the way, I mean," he stammered diffidently.

"But I'm only going to the schools."

"I wanted to go to—the Post Office."

There was nothing for it but to allow him to accompany her, and they set forth together in an embarrassed silence. Presently the Post Office inspiration suggested another not less brilliant idea to him.

"I was thinking of telegraphing as well as writing home about this—this cheque. You see, my father is so furious about it, that he will talk of it all over the place, even if he doesn't put it to-day into the

lawyer's hands; and the sooner I stop him the better."

"It is so good of you," murmured May, ashamed of the bathos of the acknowledgement.

"I couldn't let it go on, you know. How could I, knowing what it would mean to you?"

"It would have been terrible to us all," May said helplessly.

"I was thinking only of you. I can think of nothing else. You're not offended?" he cried forlornly, as May looked agitated and distressed.

"Offended? No; I'm not offended. Of course I'm not offended; but I—I don't deserve your goodness," May stammered awkwardly.

"It's not goodness; I can't help myself; and I can't help speaking now when I know I oughtn't—when it looks like asking payment."

Here there was a pause of ludicrous embarrassment, for a couple of tramps were now in the act of passing them. The male tramp began his mechanical whine as monotonously and inattentively to the sing-song formula he repeated as though he were intoning in church.

Gower flung him a copper or two with the emphasis of a curse and quickened the pace to get out of earshot.

Meanwhile, May used her respite to consider her answer. Now that it came to the point, her acceptance of Mr. Gower did not seem to her so much a question of self-sacrifice for Fred's sake, as a question of absolute right or wrong. Would anything make it right for her to accept a man she did not love—right in her, or right to him? Of course, at the back of this question was the natural shrinking of such a girl from the desecration of her hands or lips by a man she did not care for. In the distance these incidents of an engagement were hardly seen, but when the engagement was upon her, they hid all else.

But the grotesque interruption of the tramps had given Gower pause also.

"Look here, Miss Beresford, it's a shame to keep dunning you like this. I ought to give you up and go away, but I can't—I can't," he cried lamentably.

May, being unprepared for this piteous apology, had nothing ready in answer to it.

"It's not that I haven't anywhere to go now, you know," Gower, encouraged by her silence, continued craftily. "I cannot go home, of course; but I might go to

Canada to an uncle of mine. I must go there, or somewhere abroad, if there's no hope for me," he added desolately.

May was beginning to feel herself a perfect monster of ingratitude, and to regard Gower more and more as chivalry itself.

"Do you think your father will never forgive this?" she asked.

"Oh, I don't care. I don't in the least care about my father, or about anything. I can think only of you, and, if I had only the very least hope of you, I should not mind this at all; I shouldn't, indeed."

This appeal was too boyish to seem meant as a reminder of the amount of May's obligation, which was thus pleaded to her with all the force of ingenuousness.

"We've known each other such a short time," she urged in her distressful embarrassment, yet conscious of the feebleness and folly of her words in the moment of uttering them.

"But I don't expect you to care for me as I care for you. How could I?" he cried eagerly. "Only let me hope, will you? Only say that I may hope; say that I need not go away," he urged again and again in so boyish, or rather childish, a way; so beseechingly, and at the same time so respectfully, that she almost forgot her fears of him as a lover in her thoughts of him as the most simple and single-minded of men. What could she say? She could say only that she did not care for him as he desired; to be told only again and again that, of course he did not expect this yet. Thus May, by her indecision, committed herself decidedly, and found herself engaged irretrievably five minutes after her shrinking repulsion from the mere thought of an engagement. Gower, rather through timidity than tact, had in his appeal kept the ardent lover in the background altogether, while suggesting quite moving pictures of his misery, of his magnanimity, and of his devotion to May.

But even if Gower had fluttered and frightened his confused prey by a nearer approach, she could not have had the courage to break out of the net. Fred, and the frightful death from which she thought she had saved him, and the hardly less horrible consequence to her father and mother, came rushing back to her mind in overwhelming force at Gower's casual mention of Fred's name, and made her acceptance of him seem to her nothing less than inevitable.

For the short remainder of their walk together, what her engagement was to

others—to her brother, father, mother, and to Gower himself—filled her mind, to the momentary exclusion of what it was to herself.

Gower consulted her as to the wording of the telegram he was about to send his father. It was certainly not considerate of him, but she put it down to his boyishness.

She left him at the Post Office, upon the plea of urgent school business, and with the promise to return, as soon as she could, to the Vicarage.

"I cannot tell you how happy you've made me!" he cried with his whole heart as they parted, and she, blushing scarlet, muttered some inaudible reply.

Before May returned to the Vicarage Gower had cut off all possibility of retreat for her, by announcing her acceptance of him, first to her father, and then to her mother.

"She has accepted you!" cried the Vicar, when Gower had sought him in the study to ask his consent to the engagement.

"She has accepted you!" in a tone of such amazement as was by no means complimentary to the happy man.

"Yes," Gower stammered, greatly disappointed. "I hope you don't disapprove, sir!"

"No; not disapprove if she—if she—I mean I had no idea of this."

"And I hadn't, sir; at least, I hadn't much hope, and I can hardly yet believe it."

"There could be no misunderstanding—I mean I thought she would come herself to tell me of it," the Vicar cried in his bewilderment.

"She is at the schools," Gower replied, as though this were an adequate explanation.

That May should accept a man incidentally, on her way to the schools, and that man Mr. Gower, seemed to the Vicar the most incredible thing conceivable. There must be some mistake.

"Mr. Gower, there's some mistake; you'll forgive my suggesting it, but there's some mistake, I'm sure. You have misunderstood her in some way."

"There is no mistake, as you will hear from herself when she returns; but I hope it does not seem a mistake to you, sir."

"I think her the best judge of her own happiness," replied the Vicar evasively.

"And I may hope that you will not disapprove of it if you find it to be true, sir?" Gower asked in a slightly nettled tone.

"Certainly. I was not hesitating over my approval, but over hers, Mr. Gower. She has known you for so short a time, and is generally so slow to make new friends that I can hardly realise what you tell me—I can hardly realise it," he repeated.

Gower, naturally much embarrassed by this reception of his happy news, muttered some inarticulate reply and escaped from the room.

Then her father seized his hat and hurried to the schools. Knowing May's opinion of Gower, and her utter weariness of him after a single week's companionship, he could not possibly believe that she had accepted him as her companion for life. Yet, Gower was so absolutely assured of her acceptance of him! What was the meaning of it? If she had accepted him, it was certainly not for love, and most assuredly not for position and fortune. For what, then? No; it was utterly and preposterously impossible that she could have accepted him.

Thinking the matter over and over, and growing more assured of this impossibility at every step, he had nearly reached the schools when May met him.

"May, dear," he began breathlessly at the moment of their meeting. "May, dear, Mr. Gower has got it into his head—Has he been speaking to you at all about it—I mean, proposing for you?"

"Yes, father," she answered.

"He thinks you have accepted him."

"I have, father."

"You have! But—" Here the Vicar paused, almost stunned by his bewilderment.

They walked on together in silence, neither daring to look into the other's face.

At last her father said hesitatively: "You are quite sure of your own mind, dear?"

"Yes, father."

But her tremulous tone convinced him that she was neither assured nor happy in her mind.

"It's your own wish altogether—not your mother's?"

"No; she has never said anything to me about it."

"Well, dear, you know best. I had no idea that you cared at all for him."

Dead silence on May's part. She could not make the faintest protest of caring for him, whatever depended upon it.

After all, thought her father, so inscrutable are the ways of women and the

workings of their minds, she may have had a sort of revulsion of feeling in his favour since she used to laugh at him. Perhaps, her very ridicule of him was itself ominous of an immediate change of mood and mind.

Her ridicule was certainly sincere at the time; but her vane had veered round since, and now the remembrance of her former Beatrice-like mocking kept her silent, ashamed, and embarrassed.

Thus the Vicar reasoned naturally and almost inevitably upon the only evidence before him.

"He is simple, manly, and good-hearted, and, if devotion to you can make you happy, your happiness is assured," he said presently.

"He is very generous. I cannot tell you how generous he is," May was able to say in reply; and the emphasis of her tone convinced her father that she had turned completely round as he suspected, and the whirligig of time had brought Gower full revenge for her ridicule.

As they neared the Vicarage, he said:

"You had better tell your mother of it at once, dear; it will give her great pleasure. She thinks a feather in a man's hat makes him taller," alluding to the title to which Gower was heir. When they had got into the hall he kissed her with great emotion, and, saying, "God bless you," he hurried into the study. There he had some miserable moments. May was in a sense lost to him; at least he could now never be to her what he had been, nor she to him. Another had taken his place, and that other this foolish boy! For the first time in her life, and in the most serious matter of her life, May had disappointed him.

Meanwhile May, in her own room, was as miserably conscious of her father's disappointment in her as though he had expressed it to her. It needed only this to fill to overflowing her cup of mortification. In accepting Mr. Gower, she had forfeited her self-respect and her father's respect—both as dear to her as they could be to any other girl in the world. It was the reverse of a consolation to her to find that she had thereby won the respect of her mother; for it was given to her on grounds so low that May had to stoop to perceive them. Indeed, her mother's congratulations were based on such sordid considerations that they only deepened May's sense of the loss of her own and of her father's respect.

When she had at last mustered spirit

for the confidence, she sought out her mother, who received her with much effusion.

"I am glad, my dear, that you have at last remembered my existence," she said, with a playful affectation of offence. "I thought you must have forgotten it when Mr. Gower came to tell me that you had accepted him."

"He has told you!" cried May, with some impatience in her tone.

"Some one had to tell me, I suppose," rejoined her mother still playfully, for she could forgive May much in consideration of her conquest.

"I came to tell you about it," May answered almost absently, certainly not as though speaking from an overfull heart.

But this listlessness her mother took for fine-lady affectation. She imagined that the engagement must have seemed as brilliant promotion to May as it did to herself, and that this apparent apathy was a languid assumption, in reproof of her own undignified exultation. Yet she took the supposed rebuke meekly, having suddenly conceived an extraordinary respect for May.

"You have made me very happy, dear," she said, kissing her, with unwonted tenderness in her tone and in the caress. "He is all that I could have wished for."

Here the ideal youth himself, who had been seeking May everywhere, entered.

"I've just been telling May how happy your engagement has made me," Mrs. Beresford said, turning to him with beaming face.

"It has made me very happy," Gower answered, with a wistful look at May.

"I think engagements are 'smittle,' as they call it here, that is, infectious. It was not so very long since May had to congratulate her cousin, the Honourable Miss Beresford-Fox, on her engagement, and, indeed, she was asked by her aunt, Lady Riverside, to be one of the eight bridesmaids on the occasion, but she was so afraid of feeling small among all her great relations that she declined."

"Pity she didn't go," replied Gower, overflowing to facetiousness with high spirits. "It would have been a sort of dress rehearsal, you know."

"Oh, it was a very grand affair, I assure you, Mr. Gower; the Marquis of Abbeyford would have been present if he hadn't been in India"—an extraordinary accident which the discomfited Gower deplored as "very unfortunate," so making good his retreat.

Presently it leaked out that the Honourable Miss Beresford-Fox's wedding, which was thus cited as an amazing coincidence, had taken place more than two years since; so that even Gower perceived that it was dragged in, head and shoulders, to suggest to him that May's family was even more august than his own.

Fred's flippant reception of the news hardly made up to May for all the mortification of her father's and her mother's "congratulations."

"Hang it, May! You needn't make such a wry face over it; one of the best fellows, and the best matches in England!"

A NIGHT'S LODGING.

WE are waiting, on a wintry afternoon, on the platform of a great railway terminus, and are watching a heavily-freighted train discharge its passengers. There is the bustle of arrival, the scramble for baggage, lightly encumbered passengers secure the first cabs, and hurry away.

There is the florid young squire, the country lawyer with his black bag full of deeds, the eager undergraduate with his head full of the delights of a few days' freedom in town, and many others whom pleasure or business draws to London for awhile, but all requiring, in one form or another, a night's lodging.

For most of these there is no difficulty at all; the lawyer has his own snug quarters where he knows the sheets are well aired, and the wines good: for others big hotels are waiting.

Fiddlers and pipers are tuning up, and glittering halls of delight are about to open. But, when all these have departed, you may still see young Giles with his bundle, or middle-aged Brown with his wife, and a baby wrapped up in an old red shawl—and these trudge along wearily enough over the asphalt—lights already turned down and the station quiescent—towards the bewildering glare and turmoil of the streets.

And if we could hover above the great city, endowed with a preternatural clearness of vision, we should see approaching the dim, blurred circle of the lights of London, wayfarers from every direction, who are hoping to find some kind of shelter beneath the myriad roofs that lie darkly under the cloudy canopy of night.

A night's lodging! No farther outlook than this. Homeless, landless, houseless

they may be, yet, with enough to pay for a night's lodging, not altogether hopeless.

By those in search of a night's lodging, the first policeman met with may be consulted with advantage. There are plenty of "common lodging-houses" all over London, and, being necessarily licensed and inspected by the police, the members of the force are generally well instructed as to their locality.

Coming from the west, the wayfarer will find a nest of them before he reaches Notting Hill, and farther on there are plenty about St. Giles's and Drury Lane. The Pentonville Road can boast its lodging-houses of a rather superior stamp, and they are to be found, too, about the great Cattle Market, and in the vicinity of the Great North Road. Hoxton, Whitechapel, and Limehouse furnish their contingents, and, crossing the water, there are plenty to be found at Deptford, and in the vast labyrinth of streets that pivot upon the Elephant and Castle as a centre.

Among these common lodging-houses, there is as wide a diversity in the way of accommodation and treatment, as between the palatial hotel and the humble coffee-house.

The smallest sum for which a night's lodging can be obtained is twopence, but the houses are few where such a humble tariff prevails, and even the humblest crossing-sweeper might turn up his nose at them. The threepenny houses are not particularly select, and fourpence is the more general charge—the lowest, perhaps, at which the full advantages of a night's lodging can be obtained, including a common room or kitchen, with fire for cooking, and a good supply of hot water.

At sixpence a night we may hope for a superior class of lodging-house—in a general way for single men only—for the mixed lodging-houses are generally the worst of their class; and as for lodging-houses "for ladies only," they are few and far between, if not totally unknown.

There is a still higher class of common lodging-house, where ninepence and a shilling are charged for a night's lodging, with sometimes a sixpenny class as well; and these are often frequented by a class of regular customers, many of whom neither possess nor desire any other home. But whether the customer be regular, or otherwise, the lodging-house rule is inexorable; no pay, no bed. A man may have slept in the same house, and in the same bed for three hundred sixty-four nights of the

year. On the three hundred and sixty-fifth, if the requisite coin be not forthcoming, out he must go. But for those possessed of capital enough to pay in advance, the lodging-house is considerate enough. "Five nights in advance, pays for a week." Such is the unwritten law of lodging-houses all over London.

A friend who has had considerable experience in this mode of life, informs us that according to his experience of lodging-houses, there is not much difference in the beds supplied at the various tariffs. The extra money goes in comparative or even absolute privacy. For instance, with a sixpenny bed there are from twelve to twenty inmates in a room. And as all the ills that flesh is heir to find refuge in a lodging-house, including bronchitis, asthma, racking coughs, and other complaints troublesome not only to the sufferers, but also to their companions, and as the few who are sound sleepers are generally sonorous snorers, it may be imagined that a susceptible nature finds it difficult to obtain perfect repose. But for ninepence the lodger gets, perhaps, only a couple of room-mates, and for a shilling he has a room for himself.

Most of those who resort to the common lodging-house are driven thereto by stress of circumstances. The average lodger is a man whose world possessions are covered by the hat he wears, which last is pretty sure to be in a shady condition. The man with a good hat keeps out of the common lodging-house—he has still a position in the world, or if he has lost it, is not without hopes of recovering it. The lodger, as a rule, has lost everything. He may have had a home, a comfortable home perhaps, a pleasing wife, and loving children. The home was broken up; the wife is dead; the children in the workhouse—there they may stay for him; his misfortunes have deteriorated him. The parish officers are looking for him, but it is not difficult to evade them. In many cases drink has worked the ruin; but we may find those who have never given way to any excess, and yet have fallen thus low; nothing is easier than to fall; the chasm is ever yawning for its victims, and how few are they who struggle once more to the surface!

And yet the aspect of the kitchen of a decent lodging-house is anything rather than lugubrious. Here is an interior which is undeniably bright and pleasant on a cold winter's evening. An enormous kitchen, at either end of which blazes a magnificent

fire. Lodgers are coming in, they have paid their shot, and are sure of warmth and comfort for another night. The deal tables are well scrubbed and clean, the gas jets flare cheerily, and men gathered about the fire places are busily cooking the provisions they have brought with them. Potatoes are being boiled, sausages are frying, and chops and steaks are broiling on the long grid that stretches from end to end of the fireplace.

That red-faced man who occupies the post of honour on the bench nearest the fire, and who smokes his pipe while he exchanges airy badinage with the people cooking their victuals, is an old habitué of the house, and was once a surgeon in the army. The old hands call him "doctor," and treat him with considerable respect, and he can generally hold his own with new comers, who are disposed to slight his presidential authority. Only the "parson" ventures to engage him in a serious battle of words—a tall, thin man, in a long, black coat, who is frying sausages over the fire. The parson, according to general report, has a rich wife, and a fine house somewhere down in the country; but he prefers the freedom and license of a lodging-house to the gilded chains of home; and it may be said that whenever he opens his mouth he brings the conversation down to a still lower depth than before.

Still, apart from such accidental pre-eminence, a spirit of equality reigns; and as the crowd of lodgers thickens, individual characteristics are lost in the general bustle and movement. There are lockers all round the kitchen, where the regular lodgers leave their little table requisites—a plate or two, a knife and fork, and, if happy enough to possess one, a teapot. But there is a friendly give-and-take among the lodgers generally—the take perhaps more freely developed than the give.

But Sunday is perhaps the time to see the lodging-house in full swing, as the bells are ringing for church, and well-dressed people are thronging the streets on their way to their various temples. The proportion who attend church, or any other place of worship, from the lodging-house, would require for its statement a decimal point and a very long row of noughts, before any substantial figure was reached. But the lodger celebrates the day after his own fashion. He lies in bed as long as he can—the deputy is generally polite enough to call him up, and insists upon his obeying the call about ten a.m.—and from that

time till noon the lodger occupies himself in cooking what may be termed either a late breakfast or an early dinner, and in washing his shirt. It is rarely that the lodger has more than one, and while that one is hanging up to dry, he lounges about in the airiest of costumes smoking his pipe, and giving a finishing touch to the fry or the broil. By noon, or thereabouts, our lodger's shirt is dry, and he puts it on, and bringing out any little adornment he may possess in the way of scarf or necktie, he dresses, and with some fellow-lodger turns out jauntily into the street. This is the time when the streets are most thickly crowded with pedestrians; and the comparative absence of wheeled traffic makes the scene all the more remarkable. Lodging-houses, model dwellings, rows of workmen's cottages empty themselves into the streets, and the crowd, mingling with the various streams of people from church or chapel, fill up the broad causeways of the main thoroughfares. As one o'clock strikes the crowd suddenly becomes thinner—the public-houses have opened, and the promenade ends with a visit to the "pump room," that glittering and friendly bar, the attractions of which have helped to land our friends in the common lodging-house.

Here and there, among the inmates of the lodging-house, may be found some workman earning a full wage, and yet preferring the life and bustle of a lodging-house to the loneliness of mere lodgings. But such a case is rare. The majority of the lodgers live from hand to mouth, and know no more than the sparrows where they shall find their next meal, or roost at night. Good fortune means a meal and a bed; evil fortune, a night in the streets. There is a notable diminution, however, in the number of the criminal classes who resort to lodging-houses—one of those "gratifying facts" which only require a little explanation to turn out not so gratifying after all. The fact is, the common lodging-house is becoming too respectable for the common thief, and the constant police-supervision, to which these establishments are subject, is very irksome to the predatory classes. These greatly prefer the privacy and retirement of private lodgings. In the low tenement houses which abound in evil neighbourhoods, there is no limit to the overcrowding and general disorder of the place, as long as the lodgers are taken for a longer term than a "night's lodging."

The floating population in the common

lodging-houses of London has been fairly estimated at some twenty-seven thousand souls. Taking a recent report of the chief of the metropolitan police, we find that, in the year 1885, there were just a thousand and fifty-three of these common lodging-houses licensed and registered within the police boundaries. And these houses had beds for thirty-one thousand and ten lodgers. Allowing for empty beds, etc., the above estimate of the lodging-house population is pretty well justified. But it is a fact which might well give rise to some rather dismal reflections; there are twenty-seven thousand persons, the population of a substantial town that might well support its banks, institutions, local press, with a representative in Parliament, a mayor, aldermen, and all the rest; and the great majority of this population is utterly homeless, without a morsel of personal property, except the clothes they stand up in, without any assurance of another meal, or of any shelter for the coming night.

One "encouraging fact," which again proves less and less encouraging the more it is analysed, is the return of deaths in common lodging-houses. Out of the twenty-seven thousand estimated lodgers, there were only fifty-one deaths in the particular year to which our statistics refer. Now, as the ordinary death-rate of London is about twenty per thousand, and that of the lodging-houses not quite two per thousand, it would seem that the common lodging-house must be the most perfect sanatorium imaginable, and that those who desire health and long life have only to give up their lordly residences in Tyburnia and Belgravia, and take a casual night's lodging at the sixpenny "kip."

It is only fair to say that the common lodging-house is not an unhealthy abode. It is surveyed and measured, and a minimum of three hundred cubic feet of space is insisted upon in the sleeping rooms for each lodger. Periodical limewashing and general cleansing, too, are imperative, so that altogether the poor wretch who has no other home than the lodging-house, sleeps better, when he has the requisite coin in hand, than the majority of the poor with rooms and beds to call their own.

But when it comes to dying, the poor lodger must be very much alive to get a chance of dying in his lodging-house; he must go off very suddenly that is, for if there is time to remove him to the parish infirmary, there it is that he will draw his

last breath. And it is only what we might expect, to find that the fifty-one sudden deaths that occurred in the London lodging-houses are assigned to two causes chiefly, privation and drink. Last stage of all is a shelf on the parish mortuary, and a pauper funeral—well, hardly that; for the wasted form that once had home and friends perhaps, and was the object of a mother's loving care, is passed on to the hospital dissecting room, and does not find even a grave to itself.

So far we have spoken chiefly of lodging-houses for males, and perhaps the term mixed lodging-houses used above may lead to misapprehension. Some lodging-houses offer accommodation to married couples, and women as well as men. These still retain the feature of the common kitchen, where men, women, and children mingle in social intercourse. These houses are well conducted in a general way; but the moral tone of such assemblages is, too often, terribly low and degraded. Here is the last step in the downward career, a social Inferno below which it would be difficult to find any lower depth.

HELÈNE MASSALSKA.

THE state of Poland, up to the partition, was feudalism run mad. In every other European country—Russia was more than half Asiatic—the feudal system had been more or less shaped to modern notions, in anticipation of the still greater change which the French Revolution was to bring about.

Private wars had long ceased in England. No one was allowed to keep armed retainers after Henry the Seventh came to the throne. The school histories tell us how Lord Oxford, entertaining the wily Tudor, joyously showed him seven hundred men all wearing his badge. He expected praise for having such a fine little regiment ready in case of accidents; but he was sadly disappointed.

"Who are these?" coldly asked the ungrateful King.

"My men, at your Majesty's service."

"Say you so? My attorney must speak with you." And the poor man was mulcted in a crushing fine by a monarch whose fixed idea was to make civil war impossible.

But in Poland, even in the eighteenth century, private war was a thing of every day. To the Diet—especially when a King was to be elected—the rival families (clans a

Scot would call them) brought up their followers, just as at a contested Irish election a landlord would bring up the hordes of voters who were bred for the purpose on his estate before the forty-shilling freehold vote was abolished. The Radziwills kept up twenty thousand men; the Potockis, Counts Palatine, twenty-five thousand; the Massalski legion numbered sixteen thousand. Under such a system the King, even had he been hereditary instead of elective, could have been little more than a cipher; while against an outside enemy—especially an enemy like Russia—such a nation was as a rope of sand.

Russia played in Poland the game she has since so often played in the East: she posed as upholder of the rights of Dissenters. By the treaty of 1768 she insisted on all Polish subjects—whether Greek Church, Lutheran, or Calvinist—being admitted to the same privileges as the Catholics.

"This is simple justice," said they to the poor weak King Stanislaus Augustus; "and to save you the worry of enforcing it, we will hold the fortresses of your kingdom till it is thoroughly carried out."

Before the King had time to think, Russian troops had occupied all his strong places and began domineering over the country. This was too much; the Poles threw aside their differences: Radziwills, Massalskis, and Oginskis proclaimed the Confederation of Bar, and took the field—at first with great success; but, thanks to Russian gold, they were broken up and defeated in detail, and the leaders, losing heart, fled. Prince Radziwill went to Munich, where he lived and supported quite a host of Polish exiles on "the Twelve Apostles": twelve statues of solid gold, each eighteen inches high, which, fearing a reverse of fortune, his ancestors had set up in their church of Diewick. Prince Massalski, Bishop of Wilna, took refuge in Paris, carrying with him his little niece Helène and her brother. There he became a suitor to Louis the Fifteenth, or, rather, of his Court ladies—rather, a contemptible position for a Prince-Bishop, head of the first family in Lithuania. He got very little out of Louis; but in 1774 he was back in Poland, and recovered his estates as the price of persuading the Lithuanians to accept the Permanent Council—superior to both King and Diet—which Russia was forcing on Poland preparatory to annexation. His nephew he had placed under a Frenchman, M. Delorme, who behaved

shamefully, and, after seven years of ill-treatment, handed him over—a puny, half-crazy boy of fourteen—to the friends who had paid thirty thousand francs a year for his education. The niece had been placed in the Abbaye aux Bois, the choicest of aristocratic convents; and her "Mémoires"—for, unless the "*Mémoires de la Princesse de Ligne*" are an ingenious forgery, she began memoir-writing at nine years old—give a curious picture of how "*grandes demoiselles*" were educated. It was a strange mixture of culture and frivolity. They were taught to talk about books—the fashionable conversation in the Paris of that day; the best opera dancers coached them in the ballets which alternated at their Abbey theatre with plays like Racine's *Esther*; and they were instructed, too, in all the mysteries of housekeeping.

Helène could speak French, but her shyness was interpreted as ignorance. "Poor little thing," said the girls, when she was first brought in, "we must make her speak Polish, and see what it's like. What a funny thing it is to be a Pole!" Then she had to ask for a holiday, and pay her "welcome"—i.e. give twenty-five louis for a grand collation, with ices and all other luxuries, to the whole school. She soon fell ill, owing to the Paris water; and was nearly killed by eating pastry and drinking cider while under medical treatment. The elder girls, as soon as they were locked in for the night, began to eat and drink by the light of a street lamp. Helène begged for some of their dainties; and, when they hesitated, said: "If you don't give it me, I'll tell." Next day she was in a burning fever, and had to be for some time in the infirmary, with the result that when she got well she was allowed a nurse, a lady's maid ("*mie*"), and a room to herself. A mischievous child she was, proud of putting her cat's feet into walnut shells, getting donkey's ears (our fool's cap) fastened on her head, and a red tongue hung round her neck, because when another girl had written her copy for her she told a lie about it. Naturally her habit of tale-telling often brought her into trouble.

"Tell-tale tit; go and tell our cat to keep a place for you the day you die," is the French girls' equivalent for our children's rhyme. She was cured of it by being tripped up by a big girl, and then run over by all the rest, who were playing "hunt the stag;" each giving her a kick as she went past. Nobody pitied her; one

of the nuns said: "If you were not quite in the wrong, they wouldn't all be against you in that way." These lady nuns were often greatly to be pitied; they had not chosen the life, but were put in simply that the whole property might go to the heir. Thus, there were three sisters of the Duke of Mortemart, who were novices at fifteen and nuns three years after. One of them was the Grande Maitresse Générale, next in power to the Abbess, Madame de Chabrilan.

A former Abbess, of whom there were still traditions, had been the second daughter of the Regent d'Orleans. She was Abbess at eighteen, and certainly had mistaken her vocation. Beautiful as her grandmother, Madame de Montespan, she was so wicked that, thirty years after her death, the nuns were afraid to enter her room alone. Shrieks and the rattling of chains used often to be heard by those who went by it; and occasionally a strong smell of sulphur would almost stifle them. So it remained, with its beautifully painted ceilings and splendid tapestry, unopened except twice a year for cleaning. No wonder Madame de Chartres (such was her title, not that she was married; Madame was a title of respect, as the wives of bourgeois were officially styled *Mademoiselle*) left an ill-savour behind her. She was so cruel that she had several nuns beaten almost to death; and she thought nothing of making them stand up all night chanting. While this was going on, she would be feasting with some of the youngest, whom she tried to make as bad as herself. Even nuns' obedience to an Abbess of the Blood Royal has its limits; and at last a complaint was made to the King, and the Regent came to tell her she must exchange and go to be Abbess of Chelles. But his daughter did not at all approve of leaving Paris and the most aristocratic of French convents to be buried with a pack of commonplace nuns in the country. "Let me stay, father," she begged, "and I will be as mild as hitherto I have been despotic." The Regent was inexorable; and when she called a Chapter of the nuns and begged them to petition for her, the Piores, a Noailles (their motto was, "*le pur sang des Noailles*," so she did not fear even an Orleans Princess) said: "No; we've borne with you long enough and never grumbled. And now all we can do is to pray for your happiness in your new sphere." Then she tried stubbornness; when the Regent's carriages came to take her away, she

would not stir. The Captain of the Guard was sent with orders to carry her off by force; so she undressed, went to bed, and dared the officers to lay hands on a "daughter of France."

"What are we to do?" said the Captain to the Regent.

"Sew her up in a mattress, if it comes to that," was the reply.

At last the tears and entreaties of the nuns prevailed, and she drove off to Chelles. That was enough to furnish gossip for half a century at least; but there were besides the echoes of the present outside world, for the girls often went home, and, of course, brought back with them the latest tittle-tattle; some of it the reverse of edifying—as that Madame de Stainville, the lovely sister-in-law of the Duke de Choiseul, had taken up with Clairval the actor. Helène naïvely explains that she was not much over fifteen, while her husband was at least forty, and was always away with the army.

The result was that the poor wife was sent for the rest of her days to a convent at Nancy, and that her younger daughter came to the Abbaye where the elder sister was already.

"Then," says Helène, "was seen *Mademoiselle de Choiseul's* nobleness of character. When the Duke, or M. de Stainville, or the Duchess of Gramont, or any of the grand relations came to see her, they never asked for her sister; but she steadily refused to come into the 'parloir' unless they came both together, nor would she go to pay a visit at any of the big houses unless her sister also was invited." This shows that the artificial life of the eighteenth-century "*beau monde*" was not wholly base, though it destroyed the family; for how could parents have time for their children when, dining at one, perhaps, with a score of guests, they went at five to the play, and, when it was over, brought home as many as they could to supper.

Mademoiselle de Choiseul was only fourteen when she made this noble stand on behalf of her little sister, who was under a cloud; "*noblesse oblige*" was never thought of in regard to the "lower orders," but a girl's exaggerated idea of her rank and birth would help to keep her right in such a case as this. A Choiseul Stainville must not suffer because a fellow like Clairval had been giving trouble.

Besides the questionable gossip, tricks and practical jokes helped to fill up the

girls' lives. Once they emptied an ink-bottle into the holy-water stoup at the choir door. The nuns went to matins at two a.m., and, knowing the Office by heart, took no lamps, while the dim light at the door was not enough to expose the trick. Before the long prayers were over day broke, and, as they looked at one another, they laughed so loud that the service could not go on.

Another time they tied up the bell ropes, so that while the novice thought she was pulling not a sound came. The nuns waited and waited, but no matins' bell; and the poor novice had her wrists half pulled out before one of them came down to see what was going on. This time the culprits were found out; they had used their handkerchiefs, and the initials betrayed them. They had to recite, during play-hours, the seven Penitential Psalms, and to kneel, in their night-caps, in the middle of the choir, next Sunday during High Mass.

As for the ink, the Abbess was in a great rage, said it was an act of impiety, and wanted to report it to the Archbishop; but the sweet-natured Grande Maitresse assured her that "though the deed was dark because of the ink, she could answer for it being no worse than a child's frolic."

During Carnival, Helène was out visiting almost every day. Children's balls at Madame de la Vaupalière, the poor wife whose husband was ruining her with gambling, and who tried to convert him by giving him a box for counters, with her portrait on one side and her children's on the other, and the motto, "Songez à nous." Rehearsals of *Athalie* at the *Hôtel Mortenart*, Molé, the great actor, superintending and advising Helène, who played Joas, not to declaim, but to talk just as she would to friends. Dancing before the Princess of Condé; that was the order of the day.

Then there was a sort of parallel to the "Boy Bishop," the school-girls took the nuns' places, holding a solemn Chapter—the Chapter House was lent them for the purpose—and electing an Abbess, Prioress, etc. The real Abbess lent her representative her ring and pectoral cross, and during High Mass—which the girls sang—the sham Abbess sat on the throne, and, having been duly incensed, received the girls' confessions; the real nuns being relegated to the galleries. Then the sham Abbess gave a grand dinner with ices—Helène never forgets the ices—and the day ended with a solemn procession to give the real Abbess back her ring, and cross, and vestments.

At that time a wizard, Alliette—Eteilla he anagrammatically called himself—was the rage in Paris. The Vicar of St. Eustache was found dead in his church, and the story in the *Abbaye* was, that wanting money to pay for his new porch, he had consulted Eteilla, who said: "Meet me at midnight in your church, with a single friend."

The Vicar went, accompanied by his curate. Eteilla drew a circle round them, and began his incantations, having instructed them on no account to step out of the circle. When asked what they wanted, they were to name the sum required. Suddenly the fiend came, and in a voice of thunder cried: "Whatseek ye?" The Vicar was so frightened that he stepped out of the circle, and in a moment was felled to the ground, whence never rose again. The question was then repeated to the Curate. "Fifteen thousand francs," he replied. The fiend held out a purse, but in reaching for it the poor man put his head a little too far, and received a blow which made his neck awry. That was how the nuns accounted for a deformity in their Confessor, at which the girls had often laughed.

But they had real troubles, as well the excitement of tales of witchcraft. Mdlle. de Montmorency, heiress to the Premiers Barons Chrétiens, betrothed to the Prince of Lambesc, had a disease in her arm-bone. They sent her to a family of bone-setters, who were so hated by the faculty that they never could move without police protection. They tortured her for six weeks, and brought on a tumour. Then she was sent to Geneva to be under a quack called "The Mountain Doctor"; and there she died, praying: "Oh, Heaven, take away my fortune, but let me have my life. It is so hard to die at fifteen." The "Magnificent Council" of Geneva gave her a splendid funeral, the letter of thanks for which is still among their archives. Poor child! she had a hard time of it in her early convent days. Madame de Richelieu, the Abbess, spited her; and when she sulked in return, said: "When I see you like that, miss, I could kill you." Whereupon the girl retorted: "It would not be the first time a Richelieu has murdered a Montmorency."

Helène's proudest exploit was heading a barring-out to get rid of an unpopular class-mistress. The conspirators' badge was a bit of green ribbon; and when they found themselves strong enough, they seized the kitchen and larders and resolved

to starve out the sisterhood. They kept a lay-sister as a hostage, and made her provide a fine supper; and then, putting the little ones to bed in some straw, the rest kept guard in turn, and felt (says *Helène*) as if they could keep on at it for ever. Their terms were that the hated mistress should be removed; and they added: "If the two who bear this petition are molested, we'll go in force and whip our tyrant round the four corners of the convent." The nuns were in great alarm; some talked of calling in the police, but "what a scandal that would make"! so the plan adopted was to send for the ring-leaders' mothers, and get them to call their daughters out and take them away. Parental authority was always strong in France; so the girls, when summoned, did not dare to say "no." Then a nun was sent to tell the rest, whom the loss of their leaders had quite disconcerted, that the class-rooms were open, and that all were to take their places. After a brief consultation they went; no one was punished; and in a month the obnoxious teacher was set to other work. *Helène* describes a Confirmation—Archbishop de Beaumont holding out his hand for the nuns to kiss his ring; and several of them, who were strongly Jansenist, standing behind his back and putting out their tongues. Our young Pole had her Confirmation put off several times; because she was always in a scrape. The Archbishop was a despot; after Confirmation he walked into the library, and finding the shelves containing the Fathers empty, asked where they were. The nun in charge said the Sisters were reading them. "Ah," he replied, "no wonder my clergy say they're a better match for the Sorbonne doctors than for the ladies of the Abbaye." He then inquired for Jansenist books. "I've no doubt some of us have some," was the reply. "We've been worried about them so many years, that it would not be in human nature for us not to want to look into them, dull as they are."

Two days later the Archbishop sent and had the whole of the Fathers put back in their places, the bookcases locked, and sealed with his seal. The nuns were indignant; they said that within their walls they recognised no authority but that of the Abbot of Cîteaux, Superior of the Cistercian Order. And to him they appealed. He sent two visitors, who insisted on the Archbishop removing his seals, which, with the fear of Parliament before his eyes, he did. A Chapter was

then held; and when the visitors made their report, the Abbot was so pleased, that he sent the nuns a present of a vast quantity of Burgundy.

Of course, an heiress like *Helène*—even though her property was in Poland—was much sought after. Mirabeau tried to secure her for the Duke of Eltœuf, of the House of Lorraine. But she, "stubborn as the Pope's mule, and incapable of controlling her first impulse," was much taken with the disreputable young Prince of Salm, whom she had met at a girls' ball. However, she ended by marrying the Prince Charles de Ligne, whose father's titles occupy a whole page in the "Memoirs," and who seems to have deserved the love that that father lavished on him. The old Prince's treatment of his son was just the reverse of what he himself had received. His military career was so brilliant, that at twenty he was made Colonel of his father's Dragoon Regiment. "It was bad enough to have you as a son, sir," wrote this father, "without the additional misfortune of having you for my Colonel."

Prince Charles's father petted him as much as he had himself been snubbed, taking him up behind him when he was a child, riding with him into a battle, and saying: "How charming it would be, Charles, if we were to get a little wound together!" "The boy laughed, and swore, and got excited, and spoke quite like a man." His father's letters to him from Bohemia, when he was engineering on the Elbe, are so delightful, that they make one long for the answers.

So *Helène* and Charles were married, and the feasting at Brussels, and at Bel Ciel, the summer palace of the de Lignes, was something marvellous. But all is not gold that glitters. Father de Ligne wrote to a friend: "Charles has married a pretty little Pole; but her family has given us paper instead of hard cash, so I must e'en go to Russia and see what can be done." Poland, in fact, had been finally dismembered; and Catherine's officers were receiving the Prince Bishop's rents. So to Russia de Ligne went, taking Berlin on his way, and capping jokes with Frederick the Great. "What a climate! My oranges, lemons, my whole garden is starved." "Yes, you've too many grenadiers (pomegranate trees)," replied the Prince. Catherine received him so graciously as to make Prince Potemkin furiously jealous. But she was fooling him. She gave him her

portrait in a diamond ring, and a rich parure of jewels for his daughter-in-law; but she did not give the four hundred thousand roubles which were Helène's dowry. "I couldn't press it," said the Prince; "it seemed want of delicacy to take advantage of the favour she had shown me."

More festivities at Bel Ciel, to which came the Count of Artois and the flower of the French Court. Then the birth of a baby girl, followed by a winter in Vienna, listening to Mozart and Haydn, among a crowd of Hungarian magnates; and here Helène and her husband found they did not love one another. She had snubbed him in Paris, where she was a pet of all the noblest houses; and at Vienna he showed her how fond all the Archduchesses and their friends were of him. There was a Countess Kinsky, née Dietrichstein. Poor woman! she and her husband had been betrothed when children. So, one day he drove in from his garrison town, went to church with her, kissed her hand and said:

"Madame, we've obeyed our parents; and now I'm back to the woman without whom I can't live. So, adieu."

Prince Charles got fonder than he ought to have been of the lovely Kinsky; and when he went to join his regiment, Helène got leave to visit her uncle the Bishop. This was in 1788. At the taking of Salzey, Charles was the first to scale the ramparts, and, in spite of the desperate efforts of the Turks, he managed to help up those behind him. Emperor Joseph invested him on the spot with the Order of Maria Theresa. The same thing happened soon after at Belgrade. "More than half the glory of taking it belonged to Prince Charles," said the Emperor.

Meanwhile Helène met at Warsaw the fascinating and already twice-married Count Vincent Potocki, and fell in love for the first time. She at once set about getting a divorce; but the *de Lignes* did not like to lose the vast fortune which Helène had managed to recover, and which she was spending at Warsaw in fabulous luxury. In her uncle's palace she built a theatre, planned a magic garden with "surprises," after the fashion of the day; had her bathroom lined with three thousand Dresden china tiles, each a marvel of delicate painting; and so on. The little daughter, happily, was being brought up by her mother-in-law, out of the way of this unwholesome Warsaw life.

So things went on. The *de Lignes* would not have a divorce; the Prince-

Bishop would not pay the dowry, when the Revolution broke out, and, in 1792, Austria, like her neighbours, invaded France. The Duke of Brunswick, three or four Archdukes, General Clairfayt, the Prince of Lambesc, and a host of "émigrés," dashed into Champagne, expecting to find the country rise in their favour; and instead they found Dumouriez and hard fighting. Prince Charles was with his regiment, and was shot through the head in the Pass of Croix au Bois. His father, till then so light-hearted and joyous, never smiled after he heard the news; but three months after Charles's death Helène married Potocki.

When she heard the news, her words were: "I am free. It is God's will. That gun was loaded from all eternity."

Charles's will is curious. To his daughter he left his wife's portrait, that she might remember not to follow her example; to his dearest friend he left his heart wrapped in one of her own handkerchiefs; to his daughter by this friend, and to a little Turkish boy whom he had rescued in the sack of Belgrade and adopted, he left most of his personal estate, begging his sister to try to get them married. Poor fellow! with a more loving wife he would have been a different creature! Their faults were the outcome of a society which was rotten almost to the core, and which the modern "beau monde" had best keep as far as possible from imitating. In one thing, happily, we are not likely to imitate it. Girls of fifteen will never in this age be married to young men whom they have scarcely seen, and with whom they have never exchanged a word.

AN UNHAPPY MEDIUM.

GODFREY COWPER and I had been chums at Marlborough; but when our school-days were over, our ways in life separated so far that for some years we entirely lost sight of each other. Cowper, who, despite a considerable alloy of vanity and selfishness, was an unusually brilliant and attractive fellow, passed a first-rate examination and obtained a good berth in the War Office; while I, the stubborn, erratic, and not too-highly gifted youngest son of a large family, was shipped off to Florida to make a living by orange growing.

If I were to detail those events of my Colonial life which led me first to a super-

ficial interest in, and then to an absorbing study of animal magnetism, I should make a long and, no doubt, an uninteresting story. Suffice to it say, that my hitherto undeveloped mental powers were gradually drawn out by and concentrated on this mysterious and fascinating science, and that, as I discovered the extraordinary force of my own hypnotic powers, I decided to turn my natural resources to account in the battle of life, and to leave the cultivation of oranges to those who had nothing better to do. This plan was almost as easy to carry out as to form in the venturesome New World; and for some years I wandered through the cities of the United States, lecturing and performing experiments, which became more and more complicated and successful as I continued my investigations.

It was in the zenith of my success—and, when the name which I had assumed at the request of my parents, to preserve my incognito, was already well known in England—that I made up my mind to try my luck in London.

My family looked coldly on my return. The profession I had followed was sadly at variance with their old-fashioned opinions, and their reception did not encourage me to look up any of my old friends; therefore, when Godfrey Cowper and I met, it was by chance, at one of Mrs. Lyonesse's semi-artistic, semi-scientific soirées, where I was engaged to give a private séance.

I recognised my former schoolfellow at a glance, in the polished, well-dressed man about town, who seemed such a favourite with all the ladies to whom he spoke. He, however, was apparently too much engrossed with his numerous fair friends to have any attention to spare for one of the hired amusements for the evening until such time as attention was almost compulsory.

As I began my lecture, and while every face in the room was turned towards me, I closely scanned the assembled guests, seeking what it was never difficult for my practised eye to find: the most sympathetic medium present.

I discovered her. It was a lady, sitting alone, unnoticed, and evidently not court- ing notice, in the shadow of a great stand of flowers. She was tall and fair, dressed simply and inexpensively; so plainly in fact that I imagined her to be a poor relation or a dependent; but when, at my request, Mrs. Lyonesse led me to her, I was surprised to find myself being presented to Mrs. Cowper. She started and blushed

violently, and, as I observed the timid, almost appealing look of her large, grey eyes, I could scarcely imagine her to be the wife of my sparkling, self-possessed, quondam friend. Before I had done more than bow, however, Cowper himself joined us, holding out his hand to me.

"I've just puzzled you out," he said. "These centuries of absence have changed you a good deal, besides metamorphosing your name into Carruthers, the mesmerist. I see you have selected my wife to make a display of your powers on. Do you know, Felicia, that this is an old chum of mine who wants to play these tricks on you?"

Mrs. Cowper looked from her husband to me with a look of gentle deprecation, which plainly told how much rather she would remain in her corner.

"I hope you don't seriously object, Mrs. Cowper," I said. "There is no one present by whose help I can make such a satisfactory demonstration of what I have been saying."

"Oh, no, she doesn't object," laughed Godfrey, "she will be delighted to shine in such a useful light." She herself did not answer, the quiver round her mouth looked like anything rather than a manifestation of delight. She was evidently longing for courage to decline. "Now then, Licia," went on her husband, "every one is on the tiptoe of expectation to see what this old wizard is going to turn you into—don't be silly."

But I was already scrutinizing the faces present to find a more willing, if a less ductile medium. Cowper looked annoyed as a ready victim was found in a middle-aged spinster; and though I was too much engaged to turn my attention to the group I had just left, I was fully aware that he administered a smart rebuke to his wife before he left her again alone in her seat.

But if I had for the moment relinquished my attempt to try the effects of hypnotism on Mrs. Cowper, I was by no means prepared to renounce it altogether, for each moment of casual observation convinced me more fully that she was a more ready and impressionable medium than any with whom it had hitherto been my lot to deal.

Questions eagerly discussed and at present only partially solved, recurred to me with overpowering force, as the presence of my friend's girl-wife grew more familiar to me—doubtful points on which any new fact would be a gain to science, enigmas the satisfactory solution

of which would be the crowning glory to any career.

Before I left Mrs. Lyonesse's that evening, I had found an opportunity of persuading Mrs. Cowper to submit to my experiments the following day in private. She did not require much persuasion, and I felt that I was taking a rather underhand advantage of the lecture her husband had just bestowed on her.

The next day I arrived punctual to my appointment at the address in Brixton which Cowper had given me. I was surprised to find that he lived in an unmistakeably third-rate house, and that the servant who opened the door was just as unmistakeably a lodging-house maid-of-all-work. I asked for Mrs. Cowper, but the only occupant of the dingy little upstairs sitting-room into which I was shown was Cowper, who lay smoking on a horse-hair sofa.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Cowper," I said, as we shook hands. "I must confess I had timed this visit to fall in your office hours, so that I might play what you are pleased to call my charlatanical tricks on your wife, in your absence."

"Ah, indeed!" he replied lightly, "that was very considerate of you; but you reckoned without your host! I am no longer the slave of routine, and the office exists no more as far as I am concerned."

"What!" I cried, "you don't mean to say you have lost your appointment!"

"Oh, dear no! I haven't lost it. To use the word 'lose' implies regret; it has lost me—I resigned. It was too mechanical, too circumscribed a career for me."

"Your ambitions are lofty, my dear fellow."

"They always were," he replied, unconscious of any irony in my remark. "A good deal loftier than Red-tapism liked?"

"And now—what have you taken up to replace Red Tape?" I began to understand the dinginess of his entourage now.

"Oh, now I'm going in for literature, that is more elevating, isn't it? It's quite a long story, and would, perhaps, bore you," he said with an air of great self-satisfaction. "But it is undoubtedly my mission."

"No doubt you are a good judge in the matter," I returned. "What particular course does your inspiration take?"

"Oh, there is but one line possible for the man of letters in these days; we are writing one of those political economy novels, which deal with the obscurer

phases of life. We have one already for the publishers, but society is perhaps scarcely ready for it."

"It is a fine programme I must admit; may I ask, is Mrs. Cowper your helpmate in your great work?"

"My wife!" cried Cowper. "Felicia! Bless me, Bob, what a suggestion from you who profess to be a thought-reader, or something of the sort! Why, if there is a woman who hasn't an original idea in the world, it is Felicia. No, the story of my literary partnership is the story of my—redemption I might say—while the story of my matrimonial partnership, that is the story of— Felicia, is, on the contrary—we used to be very thick, you know, Bob, you and I—the story of a random plunge."

"That sounds very dramatic," I replied.

"But I must say that this plunge into literature seems to me still more random. You will scarcely expect it to compensate you at present for the orthodox livelihood you have given up."

"You mean, I ought to have kept two irons in the fire. No, that was impossible, Bob. Besides, why should you preach prudence to me—you, who have given up the solidity of bales of oranges to traffic in spirit-rapping?"

"Stay, Cowper," I replied; "as a man who studies the dark phases of life, you must learn to distinguish between the science of which I am an exponent, and the humbug of table-turning."

"I can't say that I see much distinction. Of course it's all trickery and deception; but if you are clever enough to persuade people to the contrary, and to profit by their credulity—'tant mieux pour toi.'"

"May we call Mrs. Cowper?" I asked. "With her permission I will give you proof which you cannot refuse to accept."

She was summoned.

"Now, Felicia," said her husband, with an assumption of playfulness in his tone which jarred with the timid look she gave him, "this old charlatan is going to show me how he does his tricks. He shan't hurt you. In fact, as I told you last night, his performance is all a hoax, and he is a wonderful old fellow to make a living by it."

"Place yourself here, Mrs. Cowper," I said, "opposite to me, and don't be afraid. In a few moments you will not be conscious that any experiment is being tried on you."

In a wonderful short time she was under

magnetic influence, and I begged Cowper to observe the nature of her trance. I bade him call her; try to raise her from her seat. He could not refuse to admit that she was no longer a free agent. "I grant you this much," he said, after a few moments. "Against my will I grant it you; but this is only the passive side of the question. You have said that in this state of coma she can see things which in her normal state she has not the power to see. That is harder to prove, for unless it were a secret of my own that she wormed out, I could not help suspecting some dodgery."

"Have you any letters," I asked, "letters which you are quite sure Mrs. Cowper has not read, nor had any chance of reading?"

"Yes," he replied triumphantly, "that is the best test. Here is a letter which I know she has never seen," and he drew a closely-written sheet from his pocket.

"You are sure I am not acquainted with its contents?"

"Perfectly sure; and equally sure that your clairvoyante will not enlighten you."

I thought otherwise. I asked her to describe the letter her husband held. There was no answer.

"Can you not see it?" I demanded.

"I can see nothing."

"Look towards your husband," I said with great force. But she averted her head. I turned towards Cowper, who stood behind me. His eyes were fixed upon his wife, the pupils were contracted, his whole soul seemed to shine out of them.

"You may or may not believe in mesmerism, Godfrey," I said; "but one thing is certain that, consciously or unconsciously, your will, to which your wife is evidently obedience itself, has counteracted mine, and has protected the secret of your letter."

He started, took his eyes from his wife, and flushed a little.

"You are talking nonsense," he replied rather roughly. "There is no secret in the letter. It is from my partner, on business."

I am gifted with uncommonly sharp eyes; perhaps Cowper was not aware that I had had an opportunity of remarking that his partner's—the author of his redemption—letter-paper and handwriting were those of a fashionable woman. I did not care, under the circumstances, to prolong the experiment; before, however, I recalled Mrs. Cowper from her trance, I

bade her meet me at noon the following day by the fountain in the Temple Court. The question, whether a suggestion imparted during the hypnotic trance can remain suspended unconsciously in the mind, was one of those I wished to solve, and is, indeed, one of the most important relating to animal magnetism.

The following day I waited eagerly at the appointed place to see the result of my attempt. I was not disappointed; the neighbouring clocks were only beginning to strike when Mrs. Cowper appeared down the narrow passage which shuts off noisy Fleet Street from the tranquil Temple. She was looking straight before her, walking as if entirely unconscious of where she was or what she sought. A rush of triumph came over me; I had not been mistaken either in my powers or in her receptivity. It was only when I spoke to her that she seemed to realise her surroundings.

"Ah, Mr. Carruthers!" she said, "there you are."

"Were you looking for me?" I asked.

"Yes, I must have been."

"Did Cowper tell me you would find me here?"

"No; he certainly never mentioned the Temple. He teased me a great deal this morning about my having made an appointment, but he would not tell me where or with whom he meant. Have you made me come here?" she added, looking me sharply in the face. For a moment I thought she resented the violation of her individual liberty; the next I saw that I had been mistaken.

"I hope you are not angry with me?" I said.

"No," she answered slowly. "No, I am not angry with you. Some people might not like it; but I, for my part, am glad that you have been successful. Does it mean that I am a good medium?"

"Yes; exceptionally good."

"You get your living by mesmerism, Godfrey says," she began, somewhat awkwardly—"by lecturing, and by giving séances like the one last night?"

"I do."

"And do you often want a medium?"

"Invariably."

Her face brightened.

"Would it not then be an advantage to have one—a good one, such as you say I am, always at your disposal?—I mean—oh, Mr. Carruthers, I ought not to ask you—but—"

"My dear Mrs. Cowper," I cried, overpowered with astonishment, "you do not mean that you are going to offer me such valuable service as yours? Of course, after what you said at Mrs. Lyonesse's, I am well aware that you are not doing this for your amusement, for such valuable service it would be an understood thing that you should accept a substantial remuneration."

"Oh yes," she replied tremulously; "that was what I wanted to say."

"And your husband?" I asked, though I could easily guess there would be no opposition on his part to a substantial sum being paid into the household treasury, while he and his mysterious partner were writing novels.

"He has no objection," she replied very sadly. "I asked him this morning. Godfrey and I are just now rather—rather badly off. It will be better by-and-by, when Godfrey has done his great book; but while he is busy with it—and, of course it is a very long business—I must see if I cannot earn something."

"Your husband has a very noble wife, Mrs. Cowper," I said.

"I'm afraid I am more of a burden to him than anything else," she said, more to herself than to me. "If Godfrey had not married a poor, stupid girl, perhaps he would be quite well off now."

Her tone, and the wistful look of her eyes, told me all of her history, which her husband's words of the previous day had failed to convey, and I mentally resolved that, as far as in me lay, I would lighten the load that evidently lay on this trusting girl's heart.

This was the way in which my connection with Felicia Cowper arose. She was far more responsible for it than I was. Not that I would shift the blame, which has since fallen on me, to her. Such fault as there was was neither mine nor hers, but that of her husband, who left her to fight the battle for them both, while he dreamt away his time in a fool's paradise of egotism and flattery.

In a short time I became extremely fashionable as a superior kind of conjuror, and for the moment no one in London was more talked of than the beautiful medium, on whose plastic mind my will could play as the skilled musician on the most responsive instrument.

My public and semi-public engagements were numerous; but, besides these, my time was much engaged with what,

for a better term, I must call my private practice, for it was, for the moment, the height of fashion with the upper ten thousand, flavoured with a telling spice of the forbidden and the supernatural, to have private interviews, and to ask all sorts of questions of my wonderful clairvoyante through me.

I did not encourage this. Professionally I looked upon it as a waste of invaluable energy; but Felicia, to whom the large fees we received were of the greatest importance, was indefatigable.

Of her husband I saw nothing, or next to nothing. His only recognition of his wife's self-imposed task was that he allowed the cheques which represented her earnings to be made payable to him.

It was my interest in Felicia which induced me to make inquiries about my former schoolfellow's romantic partnership, and I was not surprised to find that he was repaying her faithful love by something worse than his very evident neglect.

Such a popularity, however, as we had enjoyed cannot continue for ever. In course of time my audiences grew smaller, and our diminished number of engagements showed that public curiosity was satisfied. I resolved, therefore, to return to America before we had altogether dropped out of notice in England. The question was, how could I continue my lectures alone after having had for two years such valuable help from my medium? I felt that I should lose a large claim to popularity if I were deprived of this help. I felt, moreover, that to lose her presence about me would be to lose all. I began to wonder if I could persuade Felicia to accompany me.

I made the proposal to her as carefully and considerately as I could.

"I fear it is out of the question, Mr. Carruthers," she replied. "Godfrey would dislike it so much."

"I think," I ventured to suggest, "that he would not dislike your doing, in America, what he has freely consented to your doing among the people he knows in London."

"I did not mean that. I mean that it would interrupt his work if he had to go to America."

"My dear Mrs. Cowper!" I cried, "I would not for the world interrupt that mythological novel-writing of his. I was not thinking of asking him to go with us."

"Do you think," she asked, "that I would leave my husband to travel about in that way?"

"I see no objection. Such journeys are made continually by professional people. You and I are professionals. Godfrey has confided you absolutely to me for the last two years." She shook her head. "I do not think," I continued, "that he would hesitate for one moment to give his consent."

"Mr. Carruthers," she broke out passionately, "do not say such a thing. You do not understand Godfrey. You misjudge him. I will not leave him; nor will I believe one of the cruel things people say of him."

She left me abruptly, and from that day there was a great change in her; and, though I carefully avoided all reference to the sore subject, she became so depressed that several times she was unable to keep engagements we had made.

I began to wonder if she had spoken of my proposal to her husband, and been mortally wounded by the coolness with which he certainly would have heard it.

At last I resolved to fix the date of my departure, and, in anticipation of it, a great farewell *r  ance* was arranged at the house of one of my most enthusiastic disciples. When the evening came, Felicia, who formerly had been the soul of punctuality, kept me waiting for some time. I began to fear that this our last appearance together was to be a fiasco. She arrived at last, looking even more pale and ill than usual; besides which, her face had a fixed, half-unconscious expression, as if she were already partly under magnetic influence. Her hands were tightly clasped in front of her, and I could see that she held something between them. Her appearance altogether made me so uneasy that I was more than half disposed to seek a medium among my audience, as I had formerly been accustomed to do. My host, however, was most anxious that his guests should not be disappointed by the substitution of any one for my well-known wonderful medium, and Felicia herself, when I questioned her, refused to admit that she was suffering.

She seated herself in front of the assembly, and I made the necessary passes; but my usually abnormally sensitive medium sat with eyes fixed on space, and hands still clasped together, apparently untouched by the familiar force. I felt reluctant to persist in the attempt, and was on the point of giving up, when, suddenly her eyes met mine. A flutter passed quickly over her features, and I saw that

her will had returned to her usually submissive attitude. I put my first question to her. She began to speak, but her answer died away after a few words; her eyelids closed and her head sank forward. A horrible misgiving came over me. I hastily made the passes necessary to release her from the trance; but to these she remained still more insensible than to the commencement of my attempt to bring the trance about. I went to her and took her hands. They lay in mine inert and nerveless. I lifted her sunken eyelids. My heart gave a sickening bound, and then stood still. I raised her in my arms and carried her out of the gaze of those careless, curious eyes; but not with any hope of restoring consciousness to her. I had seen enough to know that Felicia Cowper would never return again to the sadness and weariness of her lonely existence among us.

I dare say many people can remember the indignant outcry of the public when her sudden and tragical death was made known. Unsparing blame was showered on me, who, as people said, had mercilessly overworked a woman too much under my influence to be able to resist my will. There was even some talk, among a few ardent philanthropists, of getting up a public prosecution.

For Felicia's own sake, however—so that those sorrows which she had borne so bravely might remain sacred secrets—I attempted no justification of myself; for, in justifying myself I should have had to publish the contents of the letter which I took from her dead hands, and which I knew had been her death-blow. It was in her husband's handwriting, and ran thus:

"I am about to take a step, Felicia, which I have long meditated. I am about to leave for ever an environment which has long been more than irksome to me. Our foolish, hasty marriage is, as you know, the great regret of my life. This regret, I believe you share; but whether you share it or not, I am sure you will not wonder that I at last shake myself free from the outward semblance of a bond which has long ceased to exist. In all probability our paths will never again cross; for I leave England to-night to begin a new life under far-off skies. Forget me if you can, and be happy if you can. It would sadly mar the hope and joy which opens before me if I thought you would waste a tear over what has passed.

"Yours, G. C."

When Felicia had been quietly buried in

a suburban cemetery I went back to the States. Whether the tragical consequence of his heartless letter ever did reach Godfrey Cowper, "to mar the joy and hope of his new life," I do not know; nor whether, hearing of Felicia's death, he, too, blamed the guilt of her murder on the only man who would willingly have laid down his own life to make hers less sad.

TEMPESTS AND SUN-SPOTS.

THERE is little need to inform our readers, scientific or unscientific, that Monsieur H. Faye is an eminent French astronomer, who possesses the faculty of stating, in the clearest possible language, the results of his studies and his observations. Of course there will occur scientific terms which the educated reader can easily interpret; but not more than are necessary for the technical accuracy of his explanations. But he never clouds his writings with obscurity or fine-sounding phrases, in order to give an air of greater profundity to the knowledge which is actually within his grasp.

M. Faye, then, is, above all, an astronomer. His occupation lies amidst the heavenly bodies. He has recorded his ideas respecting the formation of our Solar System. Why, then, should he busy himself with things terrestrial and take trouble to investigate phenomena occurring on earth? For fifteen long years and more he has been working at the Laws of Cyclones and other Storms of inferior magnitude, and has not yet converted all his opponents, although, it must be confessed, their opposition is now considerably fainter. But let the cobbler, his adversaries say, stick to his last, and the star-gazer to his telescopes.

The same was urged when Galileo asserted that the earth revolved on its axis, completing its revolution in twenty-four hours. It was no concern of his whether the earth turned round or stood still. Its immobility was a theological dogma, about which the Church alone had the right to have a voice. All that he could argue was erroneous, and, what was worse, heretical. Did not every one who walked on the earth feel that it did not and could not stir?

And what can be the use of cudgelling our brains about the Origin and Course of Tempests? Like poor King Lear, we can defy them and shout,

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks; rage, blow!

if that be any satisfaction; but it is in vain to tell them: "Do not blow; do not rage. Turn back again, instead of rushing forward."

Very true. Nevertheless, it is not un-serviceable, when caught in a cyclone, to know the shortest way out of it; or, when warned by telegram of its approach, to be sure in which direction it can be best avoided. "What can't be cured must be endured;" but there is small wisdom in enduring what we can run away from.

Towards the close of the last century, and at the beginning of the present, navigators—the persons most directly interested in such questions—set themselves to work to study tempests, with the firm resolution to leave all theories aside, to reject every preconceived idea, relying solely on the directions of the wind as registered on board the ships assailed by it. By this means they arrived at the conviction that a tempest is not formed by winds blowing more or less directly towards a centre, but by winds blowing circularly round that centre.

Hence the name of "cyclone" given to such tempests by Piddington. As soon as that character was recognised sailors could deduce the rules which a ship ought to follow when caught in a tempest; amongst others, this, the most important of all, since it helps to determine the position which a ship occupies in respect to the centre of the storm: turn your face to the wind and stretch out your right arm, the centre of the tempest lies in the direction of that arm (in the northern hemisphere). It is Buys-Ballot's famous rule. In other words, the gyrations are circular, and, on our hemisphere, their movement is direct, namely, the reverse of the movement of the hands of a watch.

On opening a record of six hundred whirlwinds observed in the United States, from 1794 to 1881, M. Faye finds that the direction of the whirling is indicated for one hundred of them. In all these hundred instances, the direction was from right to left.

Another law, not less striking, is that every tempest is accompanied by a rapid fall of the barometer, the minimum of which occurs at the centre of the tempest.

A notable instance of the harmony—if I may so speak—or all-pervading law which reigns throughout the universe, is furnished by the circumstance which diverted M. Faye's attention from stellar to terrestrial phenomena. He avows that

it was a question of pure astronomy which led him to study the cyclones of our atmosphere.

By watching the motions of the spots on the sun, he arrived at a very precise conclusion. Those spots are due to descending gyratory or whirling movements round a vertical axis, produced by the currents which traverse the photosphere, and which suck down with them the relatively cooler gases of the chromosphere. From that to the establishment of a complete analogy, in the mechanical point of view, between the spots on the sun and earthly cyclones, was only a step.

It was at once objected that, in the unanimous opinion of meteorologists, our cyclones are not descending but ascending movements. He was therefore induced to study cyclones, in order to ascertain whether, on earth, gyratory movements proceed differently to those on the sun—whether the dynamical laws of fluids are, or are not, universally the same.

The principal difficulty arose from the fact that meteorologists observe their cyclones in our atmosphere from below, from the surface of the earth, whilst astronomers look down upon the sun's spots from above. But if, after placing before a meteorologist Carrington's admirable maps of the Solar Spots, or the photographs of the Kew Observatory, we transport ourselves in thought above the terrestrial globe, so as to show the said meteorologist a cyclone or a tornado in the same way as astronomers observe a sun-spot, it may be safely asserted that he will find a striking resemblance between the two phenomena.

Like the spots, cyclones at starting have a regularly circular shape, formed by the conical opening, or funnel made in a stratum of brightly-illuminated clouds. In the centre of this cloudy funnel is a region of calm, in which the transparency of the air prevents it from sensibly reflecting the light. In this, the observer will behold a circular hole, relatively black and perfectly defined, exactly like the nucleus of sun-spots.

Soon, the cyclone, proceeding on its way, like the spots, will enlarge itself beyond measure, still like the spots. Before long, it will grow misshapen, lengthened; then it will subdivide into segments, like the spots, and give rise to several partial gyrations within the same funnel-shaped opening. These, separating from each other, will become circular and will form a

sort of chaplet, or string of independent smaller cyclones, following the track of the parent cyclone, again like the sun-spots. At other times, the cyclone will lose its strength and vanish without decomposing into smaller cyclones; which sometimes also happens to the sun-spots.

Our meteorologist, in short, will find in his terrestrial phenomenon every detail which our drawings or our photographs represent every day as occurring on the sun, with the exception of two differences which are easy to explain. The first is, that a cyclone travels from the equator towards either pole, following a trajectory, or line of march, strongly curved to the west, like a parabola, whilst a spot moves parallel to the sun's equator. The cause of this is simply that the currents which, on the sun, generate the whirling movements, follow the sun's parallels; whilst, on the earth, similar currents, flowing towards the poles, are partly made to swerve, by the rotation of the globe, first towards the west, and then towards the east.

The second difference is that the gas drawn down in cyclones is air which acquires, during its descent, very nearly the temperature and density of the strata which it traverses, so that on escaping below, at the foot of the cyclone, it has no ascensional tendency, whilst on the sun, the gas sucked down is almost pure hydrogen, which remounts riotously around the spot much higher than its former level, in consequence both of its specific lightness and of the enormous increase of heat which it has absorbed while penetrating beneath the photosphere.

RED TOWERS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Gerald," "Alexia," etc., etc.

PART I.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"HE IS ONE OF THOSE WHO ARE BEAUTIFUL AND HAPPY."

MORE than half an hour had slipped by, before Barty called Dr. Graves to witness the Colonel's signature. As the Doctor was leaving the room, he turned round and said to Paul, "I wish I could stay here to-night. But I have a patient at Wilford whom I am still more anxious about. You will be here? I dare say

you could sit with him part of the night? If there is any change, send for me at once."

"Yes, I shall be here. I will sit up with him," said Paul, almost in spite of himself.

He saw that the Doctor was very uneasy, and he felt it impossible, whatever his own wish—almost necessity—might be, to leave his old friend's death-bed for an explanation with Celia. If she were taking some cruel advantage of his absence, why, she must take it; she no doubt felt that he was safe away, and she was right. He could not fail the Colonel at this time, even if the alternative were losing her. Then he thought of her unwillingness that he should come away; what did that mean? Did she want him to save her from herself? What could possibly be the motive that was leading her, if she did not care for this other man? Money? But he himself had enough to give her everything she wanted. Then Paul resolved that he would distract himself with these questions no more. No one could give him the answers, but Celia herself; and as he could not fly to her to-night, without behaving cruelly and selfishly, he must leave his fate in her hands—Mrs. Percival had once told him that he ought to trust her. This letter was certainly a supreme difficulty, and yet its strange expressions seemed to mean that, after all, she loved him. "Yours always," these words especially were a ray of light through very dark clouds.

While Paul waited for the Doctor and Mr. Cole to come down, he wrote a telegram and a short letter to Celia. The telegram was:

"What does your letter mean? Do nothing till I see you."

The letter:

"MY DARLING, — Yours is the most puzzling letter I have ever received. I have read it twenty times, and understand it no better. I almost started off at once, but the Colonel is too ill for me to leave him. Please write and tell me what your letter really means. Sometimes I think you may have written it by way of a joke; but that would not be like you. Anyhow, I don't understand a word of it. The house is getting on well; I think you will like it. I have been for a long walk in the woods this afternoon; when I came back I found your letter, which quite knocked me down, but I am gradually coming to think that it is some extraordinary piece of utter nonsense,

which I am too stupid to understand. Why did you write it?

"Your faithful and devoted

"PAUL ROMAINE."

The writing of this letter to Celia did Paul's spirits a little good. When one is hurt by the person one loves best, the only comforting thing, perhaps, is to go and tell that same person all about it. Any amount of sympathy from other people is of no use; we want to be healed by the same hand that wounded us; then the wound is nothing.

Having appealed in this way to his love against herself, Paul resolved that he would not read that letter of hers again till he had her answer to the one he had just written; and so, having put his trouble under lock and key, he was ready to meet Dr. Graves with a quiet countenance, and to take his directions for the night in a less absent manner than before.

Ford drove off to the station, with Mr. Cole and the telegram; Dr. Graves also drove away, though in evident anxiety; and as night closed in upon the lonely common, under that dark, snow-laden sky, the sick man lay quiet and contented, and watched Paul as he sat by the fire, with Di at his feet, his shadow hardly moving on the wall.

He was not to talk; the Doctor had said so; and indeed the Colonel was too tired to talk; and Paul, though wide awake, wished for nothing better than to sit there, and wait, and watch the red, toppling castles in the fire. Here he was, after all; and a few hours ago he had fancied himself tearing through another night journey, on business which might perhaps, he thought, be truly enough described as "of life and death." No, rather of life alone; and that was why he found himself still here; because there were times when death must be stronger than life, and must claim and use its power.

As Paul sat through the hours of that night, in silence only disturbed by the Colonel's heavy breathing, and a sigh now and then from the dog, he began thinking over the past year of his life; the first, the only year, it seemed to him, in which he had really lived; for it was not much more than a year since he first saw Celia.

In those days, when she first came to live with her aunt, soon after her father's death, Celia had lost for a time the sunny pleasantness which most people thought her chief charm. Her smiles shone through a cloud of impatient sadness. It was not at once that she began to be happy without

her father, whose loss, with all his faults, had been the one great trouble of her life. But even then she liked Paul's admiration, though she took little notice of him. It was not till some months later that some hint about Paul from her aunt made her seriously think of marrying him. He was not exactly the sort of man who amused her, of course; but she was clever enough to know, not being in love with anybody, that the man who amused her now was not the man who would spoil her thoroughly and make her happy always; and so she was invariably nice to Paul, and let him drift on into that perfect devotion which she meant to reward by-and-by.

Paul looked back on those months now, and wondered to think how smoothly the course of his love had run. At the time he had been plagued with anxiety—he could not persuade himself that Celia could ever think him worthy of her; the hard work for his degree was easy and delightful, because, in his own estimation at least, it brought him nearer Celia. Then came his triumph; then they sent him off abroad; then followed those few strange days at Woolsborough, when he could not quite understand Celia's doings, entirely as he trusted her. That Saturday, when she was out with Vincent; that Sunday, when she sent him out of Vincent's way—every look and word of hers at that time came back very vividly now. Vincent's sulky face—certainly his going to India had been a great relief, and everything had gone on perfectly well since. One or two little clouds, but they were not worth remembering. Perhaps they had been woven out of Paul's own morbid fancy. Mrs. Percival would certainly say so. But now this letter!

For a short time the thought of the letter had been numbed, as it were—driven away into the land of dreams by these recollections on which Paul's mind had been dwelling. Now it came back with a sudden sting of pain. In its unnatural mystery it was itself like a bad dream. Paul had resolved not to make sure of its reality by reading it again; but there was no need for that. He knew every word of it too well. It was plain that no thinking could help him to understand it; and yet, as he frowned over the thought of it, something darted suddenly through his mind. It was one of those flashes of thought, those intuitions, which come and go almost too quickly to print themselves on one's consciousness, and Paul had no

time to pursue it then, though, somehow, he knew that it caused him no surprise, and was only the withdrawing of a veil. The Colonel stirred, and spoke so low that Paul could not hear him without coming to the bed.

"Beat your trouble; don't let it beat you," he was saying. "If you can't have what you want, go without it, and don't cry for the moon. You can do your duty in the dark, I suppose. Don't be a coward. Why shouldn't she know best? Percival may be a better man. At any rate she thinks so, and she has a right to her opinion."

His eyes were open, and he looked at Paul while he said these things, speaking in short, broken sentences. Paul knew that he was talking to himself; wandering a little, perhaps, for he evidently expected no reply. His mind had gone back to his own younger days, and this sound advice was meant for no one but himself; he had, indeed, turned it into practice, and lived on it all through his faithful life. But little as the Colonel dreamed it, while his eyelids drooped again, and he fell once more into his heavy, unconscious sleep, the words had a meaning too for Paul. All unknowing, the Colonel had brought a message to Paul, of which not one word was mistaken or out of place. The thing had already flashed through Paul's brain as he sat by the fire, and the Colonel's words only confirmed it. After a minute, he moved back to his chair by the fire, and, deliberately breaking his resolution of the evening, took out Celia's letter and read it once again. He understood it now; he knew that he was reading a letter not written to himself, but to Vincent Percival. In this new light every word was clear.

It was characteristic of Paul that the discovery of Celia's falseness, the great shock which changed all his life, was met at once in the spirit of a strong man, rather than of a passionate boy. Till now, Celia had influenced and played with the weakest part of his nature; her magic had been at work, smiling, and stroking down into slavery every independent thought; but she had not yet conquered his whole nature so far that he could not rise and shake himself, like a hero of old, and go out scornfully, when he saw that he had been deceived.

The letter, as he read it now, was a full and clear explanation of Celia, and her reasons for marrying him. All that had ever puzzled him was explained by this letter. The Celia he had loved and

trusted did not exist at all—this was Celia. It was incredible, but true; and none the less certain, because it seemed impossible.

In the long, dark silence of that night, Paul had plenty of time to study the different aspects of this great surprise which had come upon him. For it was a great surprise; though, at the first moment, he had felt that he had known it all along, and that his misgivings, which seemed so unreasonable, his consciousness of something, some barrier between himself and Celia—her own quick words now and then, when even she herself revolted at deceiving him—all these, a hundred little thoughts, acts, sayings, which had seemed mere fancy or insignificant nonsense at the time, were only flashes of light from the truth so carefully hidden.

"I have been a fool—an utter fool!" Paul told himself, as he sat over the fire with his face buried in his hands.

The Colonel dying, Celia dead; it certainly was a night to be remembered. His thoughts wandered back to the Colonel's own old troubles, of which he spoke so bravely. His example might be worth following—and yet there was no comparison. The Colonel had never been engaged to Mrs. Percival; she had never deceived him; she had flirted with him a little, perhaps, according to her nature, but nothing more. Her marriage was a disappointment, and a very cruel one; but not an injury. It was not a desecration, a sin against faith and trust and everything that was good.

What would the Colonel say, if he knew about Celia? Paul now thought, with a kind of horror, that he might recover, that he might have to know. How would it be possible to tell him? How could anyone be told these things against Celia? The world might find out for itself, Paul thought: he would not say a word on the subject, except to Celia herself. And as to her—of course it would be easier to escape to the other side of the world, and never see her again. It was a temptation; for a short letter, enclosing this mis-sent letter of hers, would be explanation enough; but Paul resolved that he must see her, and hear the truth from herself. Besides, her letter to this other man—Vincent Percival, he felt sure, though without any proof—made it clear that she, for her part, had not the slightest intention of breaking off her engagement. She must know Paul's view of this. She would be glad, no doubt, to be so easily rid of an encumbrance; and

it would not matter to her at all now. That last thought, painful as it was in some ways, had at least the advantage of setting Paul free.

In the midst of these thoughts he fell asleep for about ten minutes, unnoticed by the faithful Di, who had closed her own watchful eyes some time before, thinking that he was to be trusted. A most happy and deceiving little dream ended in a sudden waking; he thought Celia's hand was on his shoulder; but looking up with a start he saw that it was Barty, and remembered everything again.

"Better go and lie down, sir," Barty whispered, proceeding to make up the fire. "I ain't going to bed, and it's no use you sitting here. It's three o'clock, and snowing fast; been snowing for hours. Three to four inches already on the flat, and now it's drifting a bit, as you may hear by the moan o' the wind."

"Is it?" said Paul. "No, I'll sit up, thank you. The Colonel is still asleep. He spoke once; but I think he was wandering."

A flame leaped suddenly up in the dimly-lighted room, the wind gave a louder cry, and a soft shower made the window-panes rattle. Di sat up, turning her head to the bed, and gave a long, low howl. Paul got up, leaving Barty still kneeling on the hearthrug, went across to the bed, and bent over the Colonel in his deep sleep: all these little sounds had not disturbed him.

Paul bent over that motionless figure, and his own heart seemed to stand still.

"Barty—come here!" he said, with a quick terror in his voice.

To this day, Ford the groom is not tired of telling the story of his walk down through the lanes to Wilford that December morning, to fetch Dr. Graves. It seemed useless to attempt riding, for in the hollow lanes near Holm Common, the snow lay deep, and even on the higher ground it balled, so that a horse could hardly get along. Those six miles, that morning, were as bad as twelve. Ford hardly thought the Doctor would come, though the Squire said he must; but in this Ford did injustice to the Doctor's pluck and endurance. He started off in his dog-cart without any hesitation, and to Ford's surprise, his horse, as courageous as himself, struggled on somehow to the foot of the Holm lanes. There he had to leave him at a farm-house, and walked the rest of the way with Ford to the Cottage.

What the Doctor feared, and could not guard against, had happened sooner than he expected; another stroke, coming in the Colonel's sleep, had deepened it into death. No care, no watching could have saved him; Dr. Graves assured Paul earnestly of this when he accused himself of having fallen asleep in his chair.

They were standing together by the fire in the dining-room, having come down from the sad room upstairs. It was nearly eight o'clock; and the dismal light of dawn, white and dreary with snow, was beginning to shine in through the shutters. The Doctor, brisk and rosy from his walk, looked with a certain anxiety at Paul, who stood like a man who was trying to bear a great load of pain.

"Of course, the Colonel was like a father to him," Dr. Graves reflected, and he felt a great deal more sympathy than he showed in his manner, while Paul talked over arrangements with him in an abstracted sort of way.

Paul had everything to do. He was Colonel Ward's sole executor; beyond the legacy to Celia, and two or three small ones, everything was left to him; thus all the affairs seemed to be his, and no friend or relation was likely to come forward with a nearer interest.

After talking for some minutes, Paul sat down and began to write telegrams—to Canon Percival, Mr. Bailey, Mr. Cole, and two or three other people who seemed to occur to him at the moment.

"To-day is Friday. Next Wednesday, you think?" he said, looking up at the Doctor.

"Perhaps you had better consult—Mr. Cole, at any rate," said Dr. Graves, staring at him.

There was an odd impatience in the young man's manner, he thought; he had met with many kinds of grief in his experience, but here was a touch of something new, which puzzled him.

"It is notice enough for him," said Paul, and he went on writing.

"Very imperious," thought the Doctor.

"And there are your friends in Paris," he suggested, as Paul pushed the telegrams away. "Are they at all likely to come over? Excuse me—but one has to think of everything, difficult as it is."

For a moment Paul sat stooping over the table without saying anything. Then he looked up at the Doctor, and his eyes were rather fierce.

"I must go to Paris," he said quickly. "No use telegraphing; I must go to-day. If I can get there to-night, I may be back to-morrow night. At latest, I will be back on Sunday. Will you give any orders that must be given, Dr. Graves? I shall think it very friendly if you will."

"My dear sir," said Dr. Graves with a queer smile, "do you think this is quite wise? I am ready to do anything I can, of course; but I should have thought a visit to Paris—partly because you are not well, you are highly excited, and tearing about in this fashion is very bad for you—in short, it is unadvisable for many reasons. Why can't you wait till the end of next week?"

"Because I have business in Paris which won't wait till the end of next week," said Paul quickly. He raised his face, which was very pale, and, as he looked up into the Doctor's puzzled countenance, his eyes softened, and he almost smiled. "I didn't consult you, Dr. Graves," he said; "I only asked if you would do my work for me. This is a thing which concerns no one but myself. Bailey will help me, if you won't."

The Doctor was going to speak, but checked himself, smiled a little satirically, and rang the bell.

"I am going to order breakfast," he said. "If you mean to catch the up-train you have no time to lose."

"Now which is the worst, a lovers' quarrel, or the death of an old friend?" thought Dr. Graves half an hour later, as he stood at the gate and watched Paul Romaine striding off across the snow-covered common.

All the clouds had cleared away; the sun, lately risen, was sending beautiful light over a dazzling world. Paul had determined to walk all the way to the station, in spite of Ford's remonstrances.

Dr. Graves need not have been quite so cynical. As the young fellow plunged through the deep track in the hollow lane, with his face to the rosy radiance of the east, his thoughts had not gone before him to Paris, but had stayed behind in that low, quiet, darkened room, where lonely Di lay watching her dear master. Where was the Colonel now? In the "land o' the leal," Paul thought, wherever that may be; in that very distant country where nothing selfish, or cruel, or false can ever find its way.



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